

NOTORIOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

IMPACT



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SUSPENSTORIES

**JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**



RAW DEAL

OFTEN, DURING THE LONG, DARK NIGHT, THE HALLS OF THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD WOULD RING AND ECHO SUDDENLY WITH HIS SCREAM. IT WAS A SCREECH OF TERROR, OF MENTAL AGONY, FROM A POOR LOST SOUL WANDERING IN A BLACK MENTAL PURGATORY. HIS EAR-SPLITTING YELL WOULD FRIGHTEN THE OTHER PATIENTS BEHIND THEIR DOORS, AND EVEN THE NIGHT NURSES WOULD BE STARTLED OUT OF THEIR COLD TRAINED CALM. YET IT WAS NO MANIACAL GABBLE, NO LUNATIC CHANT, THIS SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT. IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME... THREE WORDS... THE SAME THREE WORDS THAT BURST THE HOSPITAL SILENCE WITH THEIR QUIVERING REVERBERATIONS...

**I HATE HER!
I HATE HER!
I HATE HER!**

THERE HE GOES AGAIN, AGNES. YOU TAKE HIM THIS TIME, HUH? ROOM 212! GREGG BOLTON... LORD, IF HE KEEPS THIS UP, I'LL GO OUT OF MY MIND!

THAT SCREAMING IS ENOUGH TO RATTLE ANYONE, SALLY! GIVE ME THE HYPO! I'LL QUIET HIM...



WARD 1

Jack Kamen

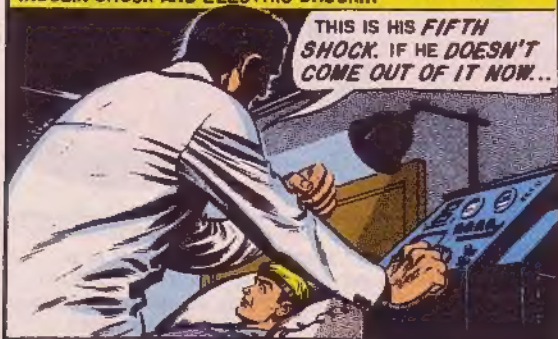
THERE WAS NO USE TRYING TO SOOTHE THE TORTURED SCREAMER DOWN. THE NURSES HAD SOON LEARNED THAT / A HYPODERMIC FILLED WITH THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF AN EFFECTIVE SEDATIVE SOON SENT HIM BACK INTO A DRUGGED, MOANING, TOSSING SLEEP...

THERE! HE'S OUT...

HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS EVER SINCE THEY BROUGHT HIM IN. FOR THREE WEEKS... SCREAMING LIKE THAT... YELLING THOSE THREE WORDS. WILL DR. SWANSON EVER START CURING HIM?



BUT FOR DR. ALLEN SWANSON, GREGG BOLTON WAS ONE OF HIS MOST DIFFICULT PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS. THE DOCTOR HAD TRIED EVERY THERAPY AT HIS DISPOSAL TO END THE POOR MAN'S CONTINUOUS RAVING, INCLUDING INSULIN SHOCK AND ELECTRIC SHOCK...



THIS IS HIS **FIFTH SHOCK**. IF HE **DOESN'T COME OUT OF IT NOW...**

BUT NOTHING HAD HELPED. THE NIGHTLY SCREAMING CONTINUED, AND ALL OF THE DOCTOR'S EFFORTS TO MAKE GREGG TALK, TO UNBURDEN HIS TORMENTED MIND, LED ONLY TO THE SAME THREE WORDS...



I HATE HER...

GREGG, YOU MUST TRY TO **LISTEN** TO ME...TRY TO **ANSWER** ME. **WHO** DO YOU HATE? **WHO?**

FINALLY, IN DESPERATION, DR. SWANSON CALLED IN A CONSULTANT... DR. JOHN PEABODY...

I NEED YOUR **ADVICE**, JOHN. IT'S THIS **BOLTON CASE**. I CAN'T SEEM TO **BREAK THROUGH** TO HIM. HE'S GETTING **PROGRESSIVELY WORSE...**

HMMM! I SEE YOU'VE GIVEN HIM THE **WORKS**. WHAT'S HIS **CLINICAL HISTORY**, ALLEN?



HE'S THE **SOLE SURVIVOR** OF A **PLANE CRASH** IN THE **PACIFIC**...A **LUXURY AIRLINER** BOUND FOR **HAWAII**. **HALFWAY THERE**, THE PLANE WENT DOWN IN **FLAMES**, AND **SANK**. OUT OF **45 PASSENGERS**, HE ALONE WAS FOUND, FLOATING AT SEA IN A **SMALL RUBBER RAFT**, AFTER **FIVE WEEKS...**

POOR CHAP! THAT'S ENOUGH TO UNHINGE **ANY MIND**.



THERE'S **MORE**, JOHN! ONE OF THE REGISTERED PASSENGERS WAS HIS **WIFE**! SHE WAS HIS **BRIDE**! THEY WERE ON THEIR **HONEY-MOON**! THEY'D BEEN **MARRIED** LESS THAN **SIX HOURS** WHEN THE PLANE WENT DOWN...**SIX SHORT HOURS...**

SAD! HE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERED A SEVERE MENTAL TRAUMA BROUGHT ABOUT BY INTENSE GRIEF PLUS THE STRAIN OF THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF...DRIFTING ALONE FOR FIVE WEEKS... THINKING OF HIS LOST HAPPINESS...HIS LOVE SNATCHED FROM HIM. SYMPTOMS, OF COURSE, ARE DEEP DEPRESSION...SUICIDAL TENDENCIES...HYSTERIA?

YES... PLUS **ONE ODD FACTOR**, JOHN. ONE THING I **CAN'T FIT IN!**

IN HIS **NIGHT-MARES** AND IN OUR TALKS, HE CONSTANTLY SHOUTS THE **SAME THREE WORDS**, 'I HATE HER...' WHOM COULD HE BE TALKING ABOUT?

HMMM. CERTAINLY NOT HIS **BRIDE**. PERHAPS SOMEONE **ELSE** ON THE PLANE? PERHAPS...ALLEN, WE'VE GOT TO **PIN IT DOWN!** WE'VE GOT TO **BREAK THROUGH** FOR A **DECENT INTERROGATION**! I SUGGEST WE USE **ANYTAL!**



MAXIMUM DOSAGE OF SODIUM AMYTAL, THE POPULARLY-KNOWN 'TRUTH-DRUG', WITH ITS POWER TO RELEASE DEEP BARRIERS WITHIN THE SICK MIND, ALLOWING ITS TROUBLES TO POUR OUT, WAS INJECTED INTO THE PATIENT. BUT ONLY THE THREE WORDS ERUPTED FROM GREGG BOLTON'S LIPS...

AT LAST THE TRUTH SERUM WORKED ITS WONDER, DREDGING GREGG BOLTON UP FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT INTO WHICH HE HAD PLUNGED...

DR. SWANSON LOOKED AT DR. PEABODY...

LINDA? HIS BRIDE? HOW COULD HE HATE THE GIRL HE'D JUST MARRIED? IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, JOHN! IT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE THE RIGHT KIND OF NONSENSE FOR A PSYCHIATRIST...UNLESS IT'S INVERTED WORDING...DISGUISED TRUE FEELING...

WAIT, ALLEN LET'S NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS!

I HATE HER! I HATE HER!

WHO, GREGG? TELL US WHO YOU HATE! TELL US EVERYTHING...

GREGG! ANSWER ME! YOU HATE WHOM?

I HATE...I HATE...EH? WHY...UH...LINDA! I...I HATE LINDA!



THE OLDER PSYCHIATRIST SPOKE SLOWLY, WITH THE DISTILLED WISDOM OF LONG EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH 'OUT-OF-ORDER' HUMAN MINDS...

SOMETIMES WE TANGLE OURSELVES IN WRONG COMPLEXITIES WHEN SIMPLICITIES ARE THE RIGHT ANSWER. THAT TRITE SAYING...LOVE IS CLOSE TO HATE...MIGHT FIT GREGG. KEEP HIM TALKING. GIVE HIM ANOTHER 5ccs!

AS YOU WISH, JOHN!



THE SECOND DOSE TOOK DRAMATIC EFFECT, SUDDENLY OPENING THE FLOOD-GATES, LETTING THE PENT-UP POISONS POUR FORTH...

TELL US, GREGG! TELL US WHY YOU HATE LINDA!

TELL US THE WHOLE STORY!

LINDA! I...I MET HER THREE MONTHS AGO AT A PARTY. SWEET LOVELY LINDA...



'BEAUTIFUL GRACIOUS LINDA. WE WERE INTRODUCED...WE DANCED...WE FELL IN LOVE. IT WAS LIGHTNING FAST. NEITHER OF US HAD ANY DOUBT...FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT...

LINDA, I'VE KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE... LONGER!

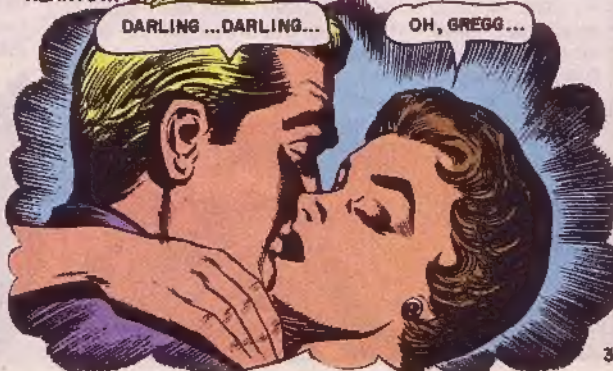
YES, GREGG! WE MET A BILLION YEARS AGO!



OUR FIRST BURNING KISS SEALED OUR LOVE FOREVER. IT WAS A TENDER LOVE, PASSIONATE, DIVINE. WE LOVED UNTIL WE AGED WITH AN INFINITE JOY THAT NEARLY BURST OUR HEARTS...

DARLING...DARLING...

OH, GREGG...



'FUNNY HOW CONVENTION RULES US. ONLY MY SENSE OF PROPRIETY MADE ME WAIT A DECENT INTERVAL... A MONTH... BEFORE WHISPERING THE AGE-OLD WORN WORDS THAT RANG FOR US WITH A MAGIC WONDER AND NEWNESS...

MARRY ME, LINDA? BE MY WIFE...

OH, YES, GREGG! YES, YES, YES...

NO LOVE MORE SUBLIME EVER *EXISTED* IN THIS CRAZY WORLD OF OURS. SHE WAS *EVERYTHING* TO ME! MORE THAN *LIFE*! HOW COULD I TELL YOU? LINDA WAS... SHE WAS... UH... SHE...

BUT THEN, AS THE EFFECT OF THE AMYTAL WORE OFF, GREGG'S FACE SUDDENLY CONTORTED. HIS BODY WRITHED. HIS FISTS CLENCHED. AND FROM LOVING TENDERNESS, HIS VOICE CHANGED TO A HARSH SHRIEK...

LINDA? I HATE HER! I HATE HER!

PUZZLING? VERY PUZZLING!

THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS STRUGGLED WITH THEIR RAVING, SCREAMING PATIENT, FORCING HIM BACK DOWN UPON THE PILLOW...

THAT'S ALL THE AMYTAL WE CAN RISK GIVING HIM TODAY, JOHN. I'LL HOLD HIM! YOU'D BETTER GIVE HIM A *SEDATIVE*!

PUZZLING... HIS COMPLETE REVERSAL OF FEELINGS...

THEY STOOD IN THE HALL OUTSIDE THE PATIENT'S ROOM, LISTENING TO HIS TIRED CRIES FADE...

I HATE HER... I HATE HER... HATE... HER... HATE...

WELL, JOHN? IS THIS ONE A *CORKER* OR *ISN'T* IT? ONE MINUTE TELLING US OF HIS HEAVENLY LOVE FOR LINDA... THE NEXT MOMENT SCREAMING *THAT!*

SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED *LATER ON* IN HIS STORY, ALLEN. I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. WE'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER AMYTAL SHOT.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, THE TRUTH-DRUG LAUNCHED GREGG FURTHER INTO HIS STORY. THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS LISTENED CLOSELY...

WE WERE MARRIED SOON AFTER, AND LINDA WAS *MINE... ALL MINE!* AFTER THE WEDDING PARTY, WE HAD NO *TIME* TO BE *ALONE!* OUR *PLANE... OUR HONEYMOON PLANE...* WAS WAITING TO TAKE US TO *HAWAII*. WE RUSHED DIRECTLY TO THE AIRPORT...

'IT WAS TORTURE BEING SO CLOSE TO LINDA. SHE WAS MINE AND YET I COULD NOT HAVE HER...'

ONLY A *FEW MORE HOURS*, DARLING... AND THEN WE'LL BE THERE... *HAWAII...* THE *ROYAL PALMS HOTEL...* *ALONE!* AT LAST!

THE *HONEYMOON SUITE!* OH, DARLING... *ALONE!*

'NEITHER OF US REALIZED HOW THOSE WORDS WOULD COME TRUE IN A DIFFERENT AND HORRIFYING WAY, FOR THEN... OH, GOD... I'LL NEVER FORGET... ONE ENGINE STARTED TO COUGH AND SPUTTER. THE STEWARDESS TRIED TO REASSURE US...'

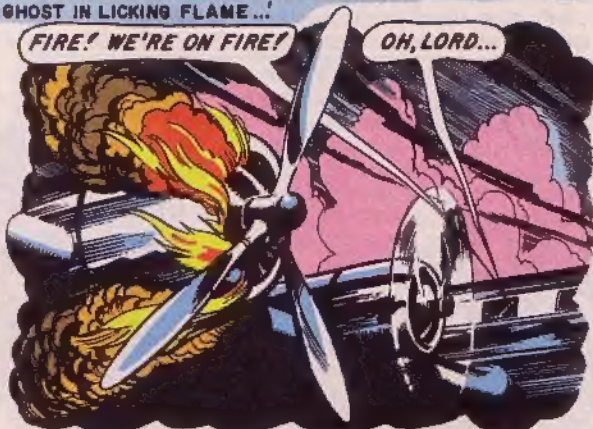
PLEASE BE CALM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! WE'RE HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE OUTSIDE RIGHT ENGINE. THE PILOT WILL FEATHER THE PROPELLER. WE STILL HAVE THREE ENGINES... MORE THAN ENOUGH TO REMAIN ALOFT...

OH, GREGG! DON'T I'M WORRY, AFRAID! HON! IT...

'THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LURID RED GLARE ERUPTING FROM THE CONKED-OUT ENGINE...THE DYING MOTOR GIVING UP THE GHOST IN LICKING FLAME...'

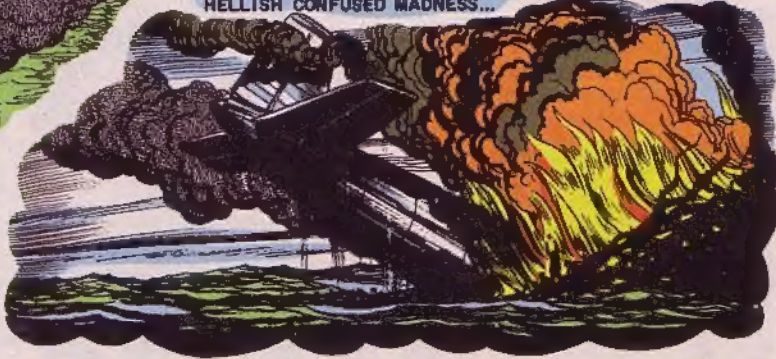
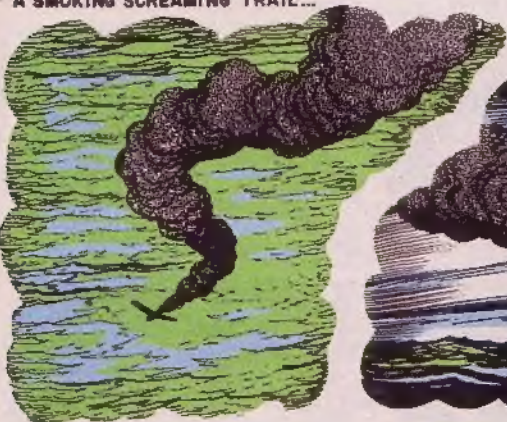
FIRE! WE'RE ON FIRE!

OH, LORD...



'WE PLUMMETED SEAWARD, LIKE A METEOR...LEAVING A SMOKING SCREAMING TRAIL...'

'THE PLANE WAS A FUNERAL PYRE, FLOATING AND BURNING, CREMATING ITS PASSENGERS FOR THEIR WATERY GRAVE. SCREAMS...DYING SHRIEKS AND MOANS...THE GREEDY GURGLE AND HISS OF THE MOUNTAINOUS WAVES...IT WAS ALL A HELLISH CONFUSED MADNESS...'



'DON'T ASK ME HOW LINDA AND I ESCAPED. MY MIND IS A COMPLETE BLANK. ALL I REMEMBER IS THAT SOMEHOW WE GOT OUT THROUGH THE EMERGENCY EXIT DOOR BESIDE OUR SEATS BEFORE THE PLANE WENT DOWN, AND THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY LIFE-RAFT INFLATING ITSELF FROM ITS ATTACHED BOTTLE OF COMPRESSED GAS...'

'I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER CLIMBING ABOARD THE RAFT OR PULLING LINDA IN AFTER ME. WHEN WE CAME OUT OF OUR DAZED SHOCK, WE REALIZED...'

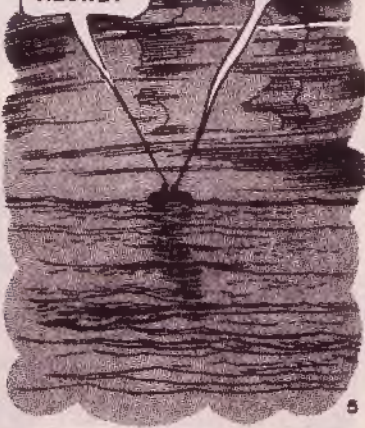
N-NOBODY ELSE SWIMMING AWAY!

NO MORE SCREAMS! JUST... SOB... SILENCE!

'AND THEN OUR HAPPY WORDS CAME BACK TO HAUNT US WITH THEIR NEW HORRIBLE MEANING...'

GREGG! WE'RE ALONE! ALL ALONE!

ALONE IN THE PACIFIC!



AS GREGG PAUSED IN HIS NARRATIVE, THE BITTERNESS OF THAT MOMENT IN HIS MEMORY ETCHED IN HIS PAIN-LINED FACE, THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS EXCHANGED SIGNIFICANT GLANCES, WHISPERING...

SO LINDA SURVIVED THE PLANE CRASH WITH HIM! AN UNEXPECTED TURN! WE HAD ASSUMED, SINCE HE WAS PICKED UP ALONE IN THE RAFT, THAT HE WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR. BUT...THEN...WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?

HUSH! HE'S GOING ON... FORTY THREE PEOPLE... BURNED... DROWNED...



'WE WERE ALIVE, YES. BUT WHAT TORTURE...WHAT REFINED, EXQUISITE TORTURE. THAT TINY RUBBER RAFT... OUR "NUPTIAL SUITE"...OUR HONEY-MOON "IDYLL"...

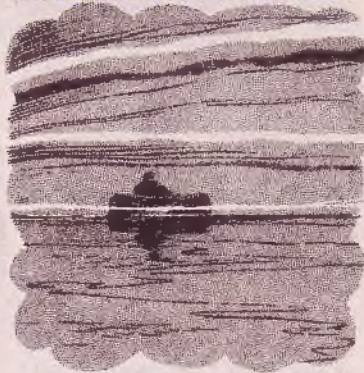
OH, LINDA, LINDA, MY POOR DARLING... COLD...WET...SHIVERING...MISERABLE... HERE, INSTEAD OF IN A COZY HOTEL WARMED BY OUR LOVE... SOB...SOB...



'MISERY SWIFTLY BECAME UTTER WRETCHEDNESS...AS THE RAINS TURNED INTO VIOLENT STORMS THAT NEARLY PITCHED US INTO THE SEA ...'



'BUT WORSE WAS THE FOG AND THE CALM THAT FOLLOWED...THE DEADLY MONOTONOUS MIND-SMOTHERING HORROR OF JUST STANDING STILL IN THE GREY MIST, LISTENING HELPLESSLY AS AN OCCASIONAL SEARCH PLANE DRONED BY HIGH OVERHEAD...'



'AND AFTER THE FOG, WHEN SEARCH PLANES HAD GIVEN UP AND NO LONGER COMBED THE AREA, THE SUN BEGAN TO BEAT DOWN UNMERCIFULLY, THIRST WAS A PARCHING FIRE IN OUR THROATS. HUNGER JOINED FORCES WITH THIRST, GNAWING AT OUR INSIDES. WE HAD SNATCHED NOT EVEN A CRUMB FROM THE WRECK...'

GREGG! GREGG...I'M STARVING!

OH, LORD...HELP US...



'WE PUT THE TRAGEDY OUT OF OUR MINDS. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO FOR THEM, ALL THAT MATTERED, REALLY, WAS THAT WE WERE ALIVE...AND WE HAD TO STAY ALIVE...'

IT'S RAINING, LINDA! IT'S RAINING! DRINK! DRINK ALL YOU CAN. THERE'S NO TELLING HOW LONG WE'LL DRIFT BEFORE WE'RE RESCUED!



'WE'D JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP WHEN A FLYING FISH BLUNDERED ABOARD OUR RAFT AND WE POUNCED UPON IT WITH ANIMAL GROWLS...'

RIP IT APART, LINDA! DON'T WASTE A DROP! NOT EVEN THE GUTS...

RAW... BUT... GOOD! DELICIOUS...



'BUT AFTER THE FISH...NOTHING...NOT A BITE... EXCEPT FOR THE FEW HANDFULS OF PLANKTON I MANAGED TO SCOOP UP WITH MY HANDS. MAGGOTS ATE AT MY SOUL AS I WATCHED MY BELOVED GROW THINNER AND THINNER, WASTING AWAY...'

SO... HUNGRY... GREGG! SO... HUNGRY! AND NO SHIP... NO PLANE. IT'S HOPELESS... HOPELESS!

LINDA... BABY...

'I DID ALL I COULD TO KEEP HER ALIVE...'

HERE, LINDA! MY BELT! CHEW IT! IT WILL HELP KILL THAT EMPTINESS INSIDE...

OH, GREGG! OUR LOVE! AT LEAST NOTHING WILL KILL THAT!

'THE FEVER...THE THIRST...THE HUNGER-RATS GNAWING AWAY IN OUR GUTS...THE ETERNITIES STRAINING TO SEE A SHIP ON THE HORIZON, A PLANE IN THE VAST BLUE ABOVE... THEY COULD NOT STOP US FROM HOLDING EACH OTHER... WARMING OURSELVES WITH OUR LOVE EACH COLD BITTER NIGHT...'

YES, IF THAT FRIGHTFUL ORDEAL PROVED *NOTHING ELSE*, IT PROVED THAT OUR LOVE WAS *UNSHAKABLE... STEADFAST... UTTERLY IMPERVIOUS* TO ANYTHING! TO THE LAST, LINDA LOVED *ME*...AND I LOVED LINDA!

GREGG! WHEN YOU WERE PICKED UP, YOU WERE *ALONE*? WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?

'WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA? CAN'T YOU GUESS, DOCTOR? DAY AFTER ENDLESS DAY... SITTING THERE... OPPOSITE ME... UNDER THE BROILING SUN... STARVING... STARVING! SHE STARTED TO BABBLE... TO RAVE... TO GO OUT OF HER MIND. SHE SAW THINGS THAT WEREN'T THERE... HEARD THINGS...'

HEAR IT, GREGG? IT'S A PLANE! THERE IT IS! THERE! WAVE TO IT, GREGG. MAKE THEM SEE US.

THERE *ISN'T* ANY PLANE, LINDA! STOP IT! STOP IT!

'THIRST MUST HAVE MADE HER DRINK SEA WATER WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING! BEFORE MY EYES, IN THOSE LAST DAYS, I WATCHED MY LOVE WRITHE...AND SCREAM IN AGONY... AND GAG... AND WRETCH...AND COUGH UP BILE...AND FINALLY, MERCIFULLY, DIE...'

LINDA... SOB... MY LINDA...

THERE WAS A HUSHED MOMENT FOLLOWING, A TEAR STOLE DOWN GREGG'S FACE. THERE WAS A WARM LOOK IN HIS EYES...A FAR AWAY LOOK. HIS LIPS TWISTED INTO A HALF-SMILE. DOCTOR SWANSON BENT FORWARD, IMPATIENT FOR HIM TO GO ON...

BUT THEN...WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO HATE HER, GREGG? WHAT HAPPENED? GO ON!

LEAVE HIM ALONE, ALLEN!



DR. SWANSON SHOOK GREGG. GREGG'S EYES DARKENED. HIS FACE GREW TAUT...ASHEN. HE SHUDDERED. HE SCREAMED...

I HATE HER!

BLAST IT! HE'S GONE OFF AGAIN! I'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER 5 CCS...

DON'T BOTHER, ALLEN!



DR. SWANSON STOOD UP! HE TURNED TO DR. PEABODY...

I HATE HER!

LISTEN TO HIM! WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IF I DON'T GIVE HIM...

THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANOTHER SHOT, ALLEN! I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!



YOU KNOW? YOU KNOW WHY HE CHANGED...WHY HIS LOVE CHANGED TO HATE?

HIS LOVE NEVER CHANGED! THE MIND IS A STRANGE THING, ALLEN...YOURS...MINE! MEMORY-ASSOCIATION SOMETIMES TRICKS US. WE HEAR WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR. SOMETIMES WE HEAR WRONG!



HEAR WRONG, JOHN?

THE MAN WAS ALIVE AFTER FIVE WEEKS IN A LIFE RAFT, ALLEN. HOW COULD A MAN STAY ALIVE WITH NO PROVISIONS...NO WATER FOR FIVE WEEKS!



I HATE HER!

HE'S NOT SAYING 'HATE', ALLEN! LISTEN CLOSELY! HE'S TELLING YOU WHAT HE DID AFTER LINDA DIED! HE'S TELLING HOW HE STAYED ALIVE!

GOOD LORD!



THE END

The CONFIDANT

THE TRAIN WAILED AWAY, CLATTERING INTO THE NIGHT, AND HE STOOD IN THE FLUID BLACKNESS OF THE DRENCHED RAILROAD STATION. THE NOISE OF THE DEPARTING LIMITED FADED, AND THE SILENCE CLOSED IN, AND HE SUDDENLY FELT THE TENSENESS OF THE TOWN... THE ANGER THAT SEETHED WITHIN IT. MEN MILLED ABOUT HIM WITH FIRE IN THEIR EYES AND CURSES ON THEIR LIPS, SHRUGGING AND TALKING QUIETLY AND EYING HIM SUSPICIOUSLY. HE PULLED HIS BLACK HAT DOWN AROUND HIS FACE, TIGHTENED HIS BLACK SCARF, TURNED UP HIS BLACK OVERCOAT COLLAR, AND STARTED PAST THEM... PAST THE MEN WITH THE GUNS IN THEIR POCKETS AND THE CLUBS IN THEIR HANDS AND THE ANGER IN THEIR HEARTS...

HEY, YOU! STRANGER!
YOU JUST GOT OFF THAT
TRAIN, DIDN'T YOU?

Y-YES! I'VE COME TO SEE
ONE OF MY CHILDREN!
ANYTHING WRONG...?



JUST GO WHERE YOU'RE
GOING AND BE QUICK ABOUT
IT AND STAY OFF THE
STREETS. THIS TOWN
AIN'T SAFE FOR A
STRANGER THESE
DAYS...

I DON'T
UNDER-
STAND!
WHAT
HAP-
PENED?

YOU'LL
FIND OUT!
YOUR KID
WILL TELL
YOU!

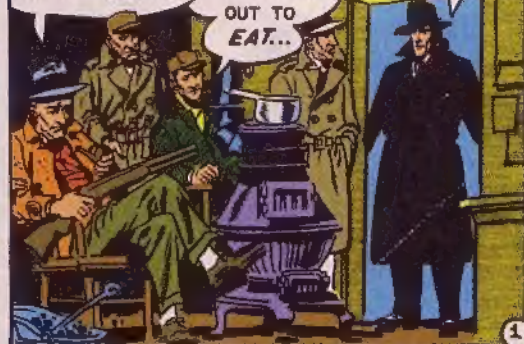


HE FELT THEIR HATE AND THEIR ANGER AND HE DID NOT LINGER TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS BUT TURNED AND ENTERED THE STATION WAITING ROOM. THERE WERE MORE MEN THERE, GATHERED AROUND THE POT-BELLIED STOVE... MORE MEN WITH GUNS AND CLUBS AND QUIET VOICES AND SUSPICIOUS EYES...

HE'D BE CRAZY TO
TRY AND TAKE A
TRAIN OUT! I
SAY HE'S HOLED
UP IN TOWN...

JUST LET
HIM SHOW
HIS FACE.
JUST LET
HIM COME
OUT TO
EAT...

I BEG YOUR
PARDON, BUT...
IS THERE A
TAXI...?



THEY LOOKED AT HIM... PEERED BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT BRIM INTO HIS EYES... STUDIED HIS HOLLOW-CHEEKED FACE... HIS THIN-LINE MOUTH...

YOU'RE A STRANGER! YOU JUST GET IN ON THAT TRAIN?

YES! I WAS WONDERING IF I COULD GET A TAXI?



THE CAB DRIVER OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS CAB AND THE STRANGER IN BLACK CLIMBED INTO THE BACK SEAT...

ONE OF THE MEN WITH A CLUB STEPPED FORWARD...

I'VE GOT A CAB OUTSIDE! WHERE YOU GOIN'?

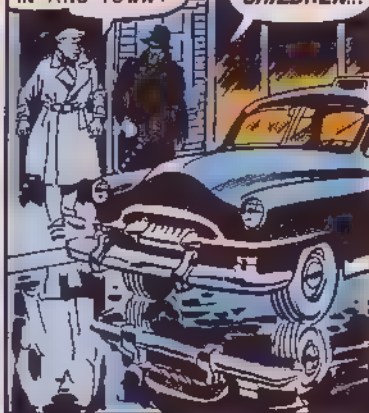
I'VE GOT THE ADDRESS RIGHT HERE!



THE TAXI CAB DRIVER LED THE STRANGER OUT OF THE STATION WAITING ROOM INTO THE LIQUID DARKNESS AGAIN. IT WAS RAINING HARDER NOW...

YOU GOT RELATIVES IN THIS TOWN?

ONE OF MY CHILDREN...



THE CAB DRIVER LURCHED INTO THE FRONT SEAT AND STARTED THE MOTOR...

WELL, WHEN YOU GET TO YOUR KID'S HOUSE, STAY THERE! A LOT OF TRIGGER-HAPPY GUYS ARE ROAMIN' THE STREETS THESE NIGHTS...

I KNOW! I'VE BEEN WARNED!



THE CAB LEAPED AHEAD INTO THE DOWNPOUR, SWINGING OUT OF THE STATION PARKING LOT...

YEAH! WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE! WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE REAL HARD...

WHO? WHAT DID HE DO?



THE BUS STATION'S JUST LIKE THIS... AND ALL THE ROADS LEADING OUT OF TOWN, EVERYTHING'S BEING WATCHED...

OH? LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?



THE CAB DRIVER PEERED AT HIS RIDER THROUGH THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR...

WE DON'T KNOW WHO! WE DON'T KNOW HIS NAME! ALL WE KNOW IS WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE AND THAT HE WAS A STRANGER IN TOWN...

... AND THAT HE'S A MURDERER!



THE STRANGER IN BLACK LEANED FORWARD...

DID YOU SAY...
MURDER?

YEAH! MURDER!
THE GUY WE'RE LOOK-
ING FOR KILLED A
NINETEEN YEAR
OLD GIRL...

THE CAB DRIVER CHUCKLED...

**HEY! I'M DRIVING...
AND I DON'T KNOW
WHERE I'M GOING!**

OH... I'M
SORRY!
TAKE ME
TO 155
GROVE
STREET...

THE CAB DRIVER'S EYES NARROWED...

155 GROVE?! YOU
SURE YOU GOT THE
RIGHT ADDRESS?

WHY... YES...
THAT'S WHAT
IT SAYS... 155
GROVE!
SOMETHING
WRONG?

THE CAB DRIVER SHRUGGED...

NOTHING'S **WRONG!** IT'S
JUST THAT 155 GROVE
STREET IS IN THE
WORST SECTION OF
TOWN! YOU SAID
YOUR KID...

HE... HE'S BEEN...
DOWN ON HIS LUCK
LATELY! I'VE COME
TO... **HELP HIM
OUT!**

THE GLEAMING WET TAXI MOVED THROUGH THE BLACK DOWNPOUR,
UP DESERTED SHIMMERING STREETS THAT HARBORED ONLY THE
REFLECTIONS OF THEIR OWN STREET LAMPS. FROM TIME TO TIME
A GROUP OF MEN MOVED IN AND OUT OF THE HEADLIGHT BEAM...
MORE MEN WITH GUNS AND CLUBS AND ANGER...

YOU... YOU HAVE QUITE A
POSSE ORGANIZED...

**WE'LL FIND HIM. WE'LL
FIND HIM IF WE HAVE TO
BEAT EVERY BUSH IN THE
COUNTY. HE WON'T GET
AWAY...**

THE LAWNS GREW SPARSER AND THE HOUSES GREW
SHABBIER AS THE CAB HUMMED THROUGH THE SILENT
SOAKING TOWN...

... AND WHEN YOU **FIND HIM,**
HE'LL HAVE A **FAIR TRIAL,**
OF COURSE...

TRIAL, NOTHING.
WE'LL **HANG HIM**
FROM THE **NEAREST
TREE...**

YOU
MEAN
YOU'D
LYNCH
HIM?
WITHOUT...

HE'S A **KILLER, AIN'T HE?** HE **PICKED UP**
ONE OF THE **SWEETEST** GALS IN THIS TOWN...
OLD **JEB BARKER'S DAUGHTER...** TOOK HER
DOWN BY THE RIVER. AND **WELL...** THEN HE
MURDERED HER! YEAH! WE'D **LYNCH HIM.**
YOU'RE **DARN RIGHT!** THE **MINUTE** WE GET
OUR **HANDS** ON HIM!

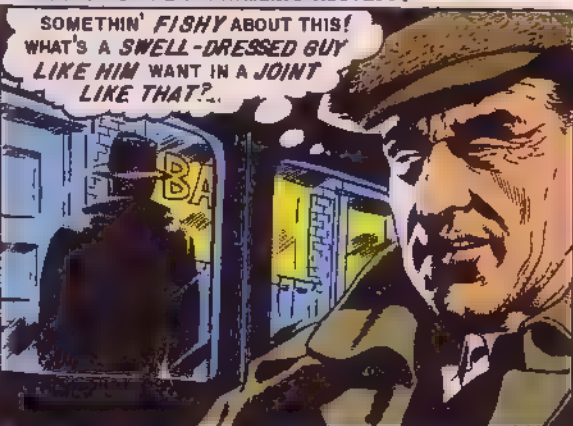
THE CAB STOPPED BEFORE AN OLD RUN-DOWN STRUCTURE HOUSING A DIRTY-LOOKING BAR WITH TWO BROKEN-WINDOWED FLOORS ABOVE. THE STRANGER STEPPED OUT OF THE CAB AND PAID THE FARE...



YOU *SURE* THIS IS THE PLACE YOU WANTED?

YES! *THIS* IS IT! '155'! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

THE CAB DRIVER WATCHED THE MAN IN BLACK CROSS THE SIDEWALK TO THE BAR, PEER IN, THEN TURN TO THE DOOR LEADING TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



SOMETHIN' *FISHY* ABOUT THIS! WHAT'S A SWELL-DRESSED GUY LIKE HIM WANT IN A JOINT LIKE THAT?..

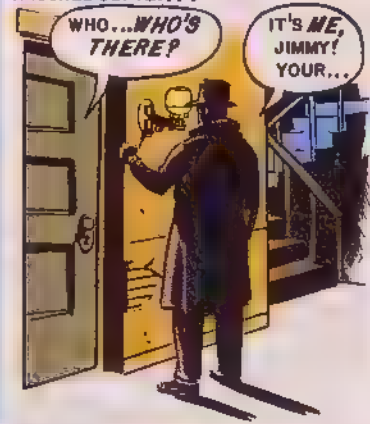
THE STRANGER STEPPED INTO THE MUSTY INTERIOR OF THE OLD BUILDING AND CLIMBED THE SQUEAKING STAIRS...



THE CAB DRIVER GUNNED THE ENGINE OF HIS TAXI AND SPED OFF INTO THE WATERY NIGHT...



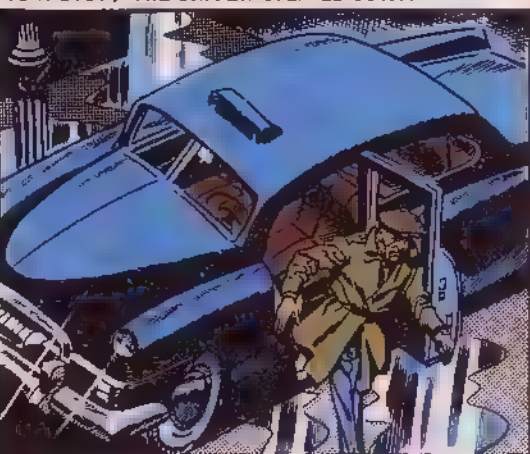
THE STRANGER STOOD BEFORE THE BATTERED DOOR OF THE APARTMENT CORRESPONDING TO THE NUMBER IN THE LETTER IN HIS HAND. HE KNOCKED SOFTLY...



WHO...WHO'S THERE?

IT'S ME, JIMMY! YOUR...

THE CAB SWUNG AROUND THE CORNER AND SQUEALED TO A STOP. THE DRIVER STEPPED OUT...



HE WALKED BACK UP THE BLOCK TO THE BUILDING WITH THE SHABBY BAR WHERE HE'D DROPPED THE STRANGER. HE HESITATED A MOMENT AT THE DOOR TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



THEN HE DARTED UP THE ALLEY TO THE REAR OF THE BUILDING...



THE ONE LIGHT STREAMING INTO THE DOWNPOUR SHOWED THE CAB DRIVER HIS OBJECTIVE. HE SWUNG HIMSELF UP ONTO THE FIRE-ESCAPE LADDER...



...AND STEALTHILY CLIMBED UP INTO THE NIGHT UNTIL HE COULD SEE INTO THE ILLUMINATED ROOM...



THE STRANGER WAS THERE, ALL RIGHT... SITTING ON A BED... HIS COAT, HAT, AND SCARF BESIDE HIM... HIS BACK TO THE WINDOW. BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE IN THE ROOM WITH THE STRANGER, ANOTHER MAN. AND THE CAB DRIVER'S BLOOD SURGED ANGRILY THOUGH HIS VEINS...

THEY WERE WHISPERING TOGETHER, THE STRANGER AND THE MAN AN ENTIRE TOWN WAS LOOKING FOR. THE KILLER WAS CRYING SOFTLY... AND TALKING EARNESTLY TO THE STRANGER. AND THE STRANGER WAS PATTING HIS SHOULDER AND COMFORTING HIM. OUTSIDE, ON THE FIRE-ESCAPE, THE TAXI DRIVER SWORE...

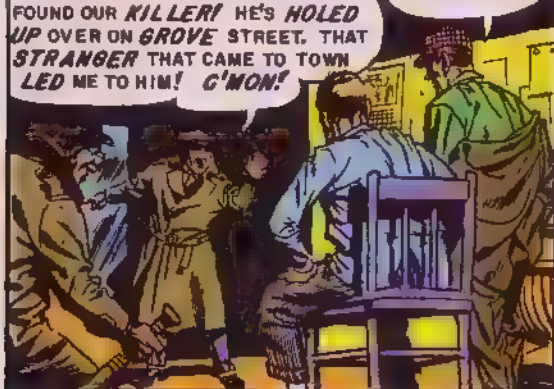
IT'S HIM! IT'S THE GUY WE'RE LOOKING FOR! THE MURDERER!



THE MEN AROUND THE POT-BELLIED STOVE IN THE STATION FROZE, LIKE WAX STATUES, AS THE CABBIE CAME IN, SHOUTING...

G'MON! I'VE FOUND HIM! I'VE FOUND OUR KILLER! HE'S HOLED UP OVER ON GROVE STREET. THAT STRANGER THAT CAME TO TOWN LED ME TO HIM! G'MON!

LET'S GO!



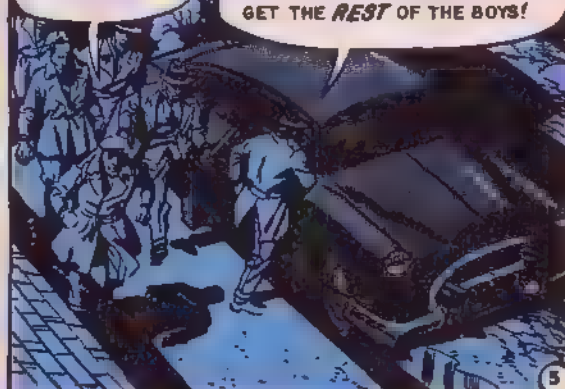
***??!! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK AND TELL THE BOYS!



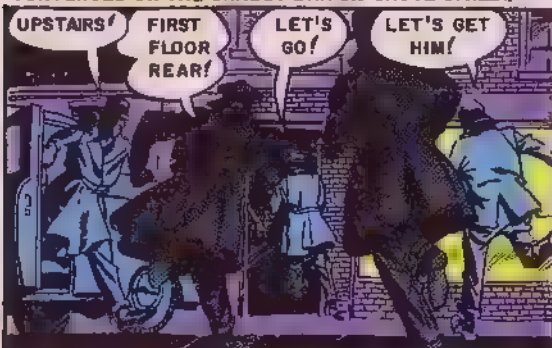
THEY Poured FROM THE STATION WAITING ROOM WITH CLUBS AND GUNS AND ANGRY FACES. CAR DOORS SLAMMED. CURSES RANG INTO THE NIGHT. ENGINES ROARED...

FOLLOW ME!

STOP OFF AT THE BUS DEPOT! GET THE REST OF THE BOYS!



CARS FLASHED THROUGH THE LIQUID NIGHT. MEN SHOUTED TO OTHER MEN. MORE CARS JOINED. LITTLE GROUPS PATROLLING THE STREETS ON THE WAY WERE PICKED UP. A ROARING, SCREAMING CONFUSION OF AUTO ENGINES AND SQUEALING BRAKES CONVERGED ON THE SHABBY BAR ON GROVE STREET.



UPSTAIRS!

FIRST FLOOR REAR!

LET'S GO!

LET'S GET HIM!

THE OLD BATTERED DOOR RELEASED ITS WEAK HOLD ON ITS HINGES AND CRASHED INWARD, AND THE ANGRY MEN POURED THROUGH...



WHERE IS HE?!

WHERE'D HE GO?

THE STRANGER IN BLACK STOOD ALONE BEFORE THE INTRUDERS, CALMLY BUTTONING HIS OVERCOAT...

HE'S GONE!

WHERE'D HE GO, BLAST YOU?



HEAVY FOOTSTEPS POUNDED UP STAIRS THAT SQUEALED THEIR AGED WOODEN OBJECTIONS. SNARLING VOICES FILLED THE MUSTY STRUCTURE...

SOMEBODY COVER THE BACK!

BUST DOWN THE DOOR!

ONE SIDE!



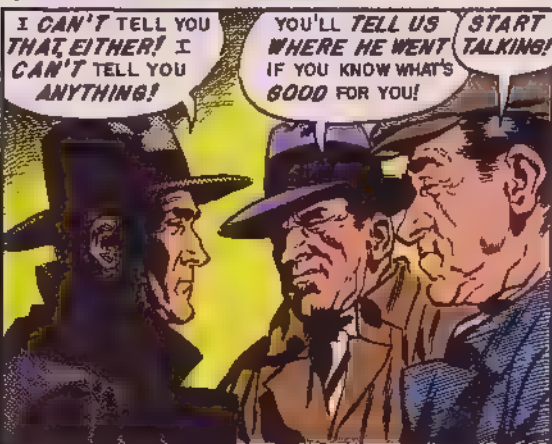
THE STRANGER SMILED OUT FROM BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT... A THIN-LIPPED, SAD SMILE...



I... CAN'T TELL YOU!

WHO IS HE? WHAT'S HIS NAME?

THE STRANGER SHOOK HIS HEAD...

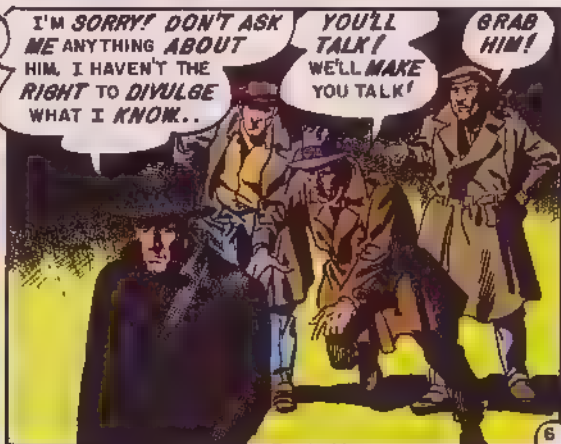


I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT, EITHER! I CAN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING!

YOU'LL TELL US WHERE HE WENT IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

START TALKING!

THE STRANGER STARTED TOWARD THE DOOR...



I'M SORRY! DON'T ASK ME ANYTHING ABOUT HIM. I HAVEN'T THE RIGHT TO DIVULGE WHAT I KNOW...

YOU'LL TALK! WE'LL MAKE YOU TALK!

GRAB HIM!

THEY HELD HIM WITH HIS ARMS BEHIND HIS BACK. SOMEONE KNOCKED OFF HIS HAT. SOMEONE ELSE SLAPPED HIS FACE SAVAGELY...



THEY'D SEARCHED FOR DAYS, THESE MEN. THEY'D HOUNDED THE KILLER, ITCHING FOR REVENGE, HUNGRY FOR HIS BLOOD, SEETHING WITH HATE AND PEAKED WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF INFLECTING PUNISHMENT. THESE WERE *RIGHTEOUS MEN ON A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE*, AND NO ONE COULD STAND IN THEIR WAY. THEY POUNDED AND KICKED AND PUNCHED...



HE LAY IN A BLOODY BEATEN HEAP UPON THE FLOOR, THE STRANGER. BESIDE HIM LAY A WHITE PIECE OF PAPER...CLEAN AND PURE WHITE. SOMEONE PICKED IT UP...



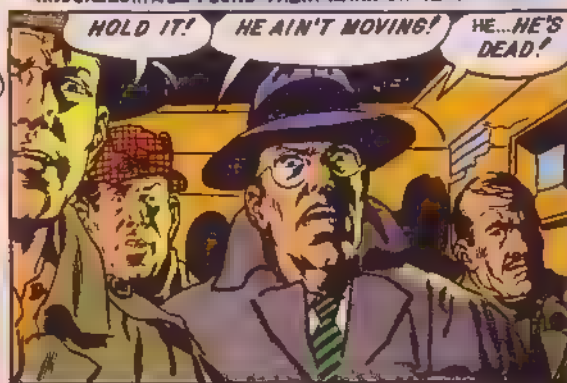
FISTS STRUCK OUT. FISTS WITH FURY AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION BEHIND THEM...



SOMEONE STRUCK OUT. FISTS WITH FURY AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION BEHIND THEM... SOMEONE KICKED HARD. THE TIGHT-LIPPED MOUTH REMAINED SEALED...



THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AT JUST MISSING THEIR QUARRY POURED DOWN UPON THIS STRANGER IN BLACK BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT HELP THEM...WOULD NOT GIVE THEM THE INFORMATION THEY SOUGHT. CLUBS. GUN-BUTTS...BRASS-KNUCKLES...ALL FOUND THEIR MARK UNTIL...



SOMEONE KNELT AND PULLED THE BLACK SCARF FROM THE DEAD MAN'S NECK, SLOWLY OPENED THE BLACK OVERCOAT. HIS STIFF WHITE COLLAR WAS JUST BEGINNING TO ABSORB THE BLOOD THAT OOZED FROM HIS TIGHT-LIPPED MOUTH...



THE END



PROPOSAL



He had met her at a Gala Dance, wherein had gathered the employees of the Hofstetter Pig Iron Factory. For weeks before, since he first noticed her in Accounts Payable, Marvin Bindlestiff had eyes for no one but the slim blue-eyed girl with the upswept blond hair. Silently Marvin had gazed at her... silently he had yearned to meet the young woman named Desire Flinch. But Marvin was a reticent young man: introducing himself brusquely was not to be considered. That's why the Gala Dance was such a godsend. True, he hadn't actually *danced* with her... too many others waited in line for *that* blissful experience... but he *had* escorted her home. In the darkness of the night they strolled side-by-side, and Marvin's heart had nearly burst through his best white-on-white shirt with desire for Desire. For a fleeting moment he had even entertained the brazen idea of holding her hand. But it was enough, Marvin mooned, just to *meet* her!

A week later... after he had wined and dined her at Ye Vealburger Valhalla, and danced with her at the Riding & Riveting Club... Marvin made up his mind. Donning his newest sack suit, he set his stiff straw hat at an aggressive angle and, his courage screwed up, set out for the Flinch home. The worst that could happen, he mused, was for elderly Mr. Flinch to say NO when Marvin revealed that his intentions toward Desire were marital.

The slim girl, herself, answered the doorbell; her flashing smile lit the way to the parlor, where her daddy snorted over the ships' arrival column of the evening paper. With a demure grin Desire stepped out of the room,

leaving the two men to their conversation. The way she had smirked told Marvin that *her* answer, at any rate, was an emphatic YES!

Heart beating wildly, Marvin plunged into the object of his visit. His prospects in Pig Iron were good... he neither drank, smoked nor cursed... he had a tidy boodle stashed away in the local bank. That was why he considered himself worthy of asking Desire's hand in marriage.

Old Mr. Flinch arose, muttering over and over to himself: "The lad wants her hand, eh? It's her *hand* he's come for, is it?"

Marvin held his breath while Mr. Flinch crossed the room, opened the double-doors and called for his daughter. Marvin's heart ascended to his throat while the girl entered and glanced coyly at him.

"The young man has come to ask for your hand, daughter," the older man intoned. "What do *you* say?"

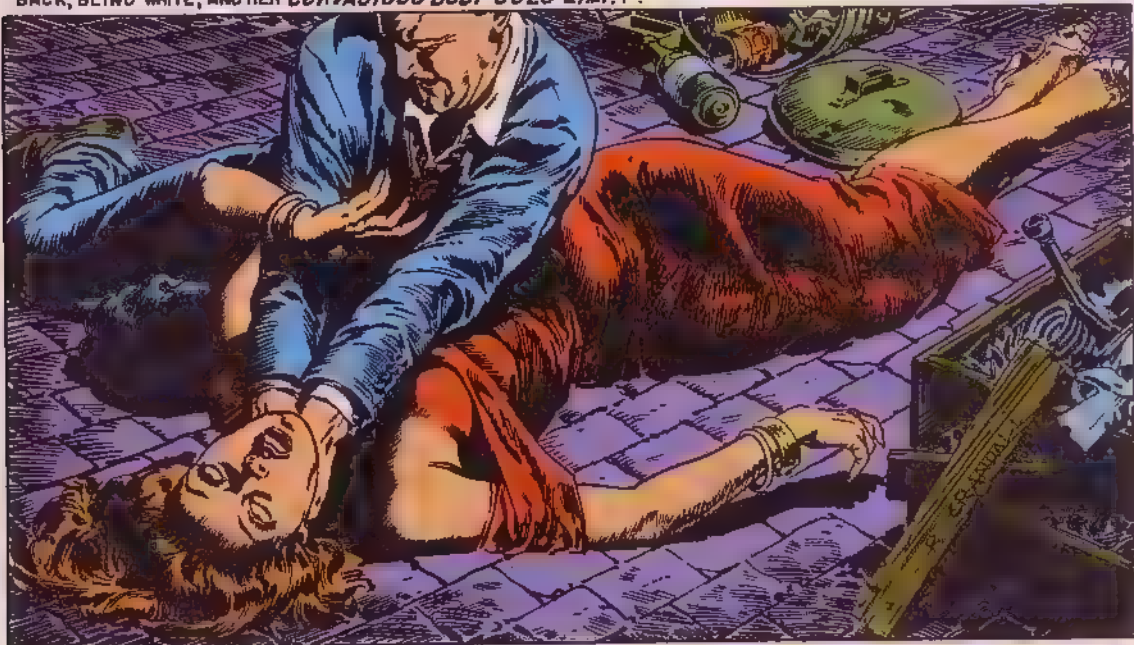
Without a moment's hesitation Desire smiled openly at Marvin. Her left hand circled her right wrist and, with a quick movement, twisted energetically. Marvin Bindlestiff's mouth gaped awkwardly. Desire had unscrewed her right hand and was offering the realistic prosthetic appliance to him.

"You have what you came for," the old man said kindly, as Marvin stared at the artificial hand he had been offered. "When you wish to ask for something *else*, feel free to make the request!"

And with that, Mr. Flinch snorted and went back to reading the ships' arrival column in his evening paper.

FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!

GO *AHEAD*, MARTY! *FINISH* THE JOB! YOU'VE GOT TO NOW! *KILL HER!* TIGHTEN YOUR *FINGERS* AROUND HER SOFT WHITE *THROAT!* *SQUEEZE!* TIGHTER! *TIGHTER!* *SQUEEZE* TILL YOU *CHOKE OFF* HER *SCREAMS.* *SQUEEZE* TILL SHE STOPS *CLAWING* AT YOU. *SQUEEZE* TILL HER *LUNGS* STOP HEAVING AND HER *EYES* ROLL BACK, BLIND WHITE, AND HER *CURVACIOUS BODY* GOES *LIMP.*



ALL RIGHT, MARTY. IT'S *DONE.* YOU CAN *STOP*, NOW. YOU'RE JUST *SQUEEZING* THE NECK OF A *CORPSE*, NOW. SHE'S *DEAD.* WELL, *DON'T* JUST *STAND* THERE LOOKING *STUPID!* YOU'VE JUST *COMMITTED* *MURDER.* YOU'VE GOT TO GET *OUT* OF HERE, BUT *FAST.*

YEAH! GOT TO GET *AWAY* BEFORE SOMEBODY COMES *ALONG!* GOT TO...

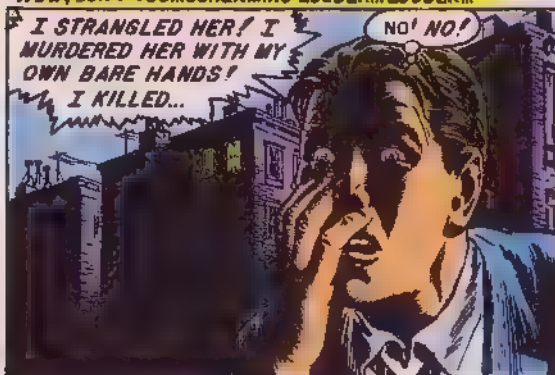


THAT'S IT, MARTY! *RUN!* RUN FROM THE *SCENE* OF THE *CRIME!* RUN FROM YOUR *SICKENING* *FILTHY* *DEED!* YOU'RE *SAFE*, MARTY! NO *WITNESSES!* NO ONE TO *TALK!* NO ONE TO...TO... *WAIT!* WHAT'S *THAT*, MARTY? WHAT ARE YOU *SAYING?*...

I KILLED HER! I KILLED
MILLIE BELSON! I KILLED.



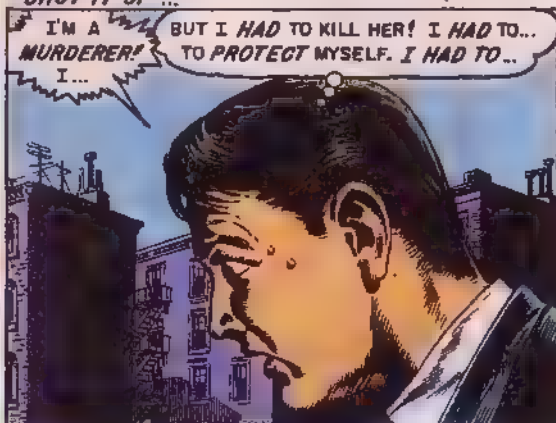
SHUT UP, MARTY! DON'T SAY THOSE THINGS! SOMEBODY WILL HEAR YOU! **WHAT?** YOU'RE NOT SAYING THOSE THINGS? WELL YOU **HEARD IT, DIDN'T YOU?** YOU **HEAR** THAT ACCUSING VOICE INSIDE YOUR BRAIN **NOW**, DON'T YOU...SCREAMING LOUDER...LOUDER...



I STRANGLED HER! I MURDERED HER WITH MY OWN BARE HANDS! I KILLED...

NO! NO!

THAT'S THE WAY, MARTY! ARGUE WITH THAT STUPID SQUEALING VOICE. ANSWER IT BACK! EXPLAIN! SHUT IT UP!...



I'M A MURDERER! I...

BUT I HAD TO KILL HER! I HAD TO... TO PROTECT MYSELF. I HAD TO...

SURE YOU HAD TO, MARTY BOY! NATCH! OF COURSE! CERTAINLY! WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO? ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE **CIRCUMSTANCES**...DRIFTING INTO THAT **BAR** EARLIER THIS EVENING, LOOKING FOR SOME FUN FOR A CHANGE



TIRED OF BEING GOOPED UP IN THAT LOUSY HOTEL ROOM. THIS LOOKS LIKE A QUIET PLACE. HMM...NICE BABE...GIVING ME THE EYE, TOO...

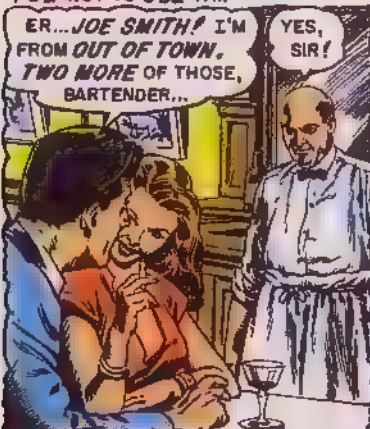
IT'D BEEN A **LONG TIME**, EH, MARTY? A LONG TIME OF **HIDING OUT**. A LONG TIME WITHOUT A **DRINK**. A LONG TIME WITHOUT SOMEONE LIKE **HER**. SO YOU WASTED NO TIME. YOU **SAW** YOUR CHANCE AND YOU **GRABBED** AT IT. YOU'VE **ALWAYS** DONE THAT, **HAVEN'T** YOU, MARTY?...



HELLO, HONEY! YOU LOOK LONESOME! MIND IF A LONESOME GUY JOINS YOU? CAN I BUY YOU THE NEXT ONE?

SURE, HANDSOME! SIT DOWN! I GOT THE EVENING TO KILL! MY NAME'S MILLIE...MILLIE BELSON! WHAT'S YOURS?

YOU WERE **GLEVER**, MARTY! YOU WERE **NO DOPE!** YOUR **NAME** HAD BEEN IN **EVERY PAPER IN TOWN** A FEW WEEKS AGO. YOU WERE **CAREFUL** NOT TO **USE** IT...



ER...JOE SMITH! I'M FROM OUT OF TOWN. TWO MORE OF THOSE, BARTENDER...

YES, SIR!

BUT THAT WAS AN **IDIOTIC MISTAKE**, WASN'T IT, MARTY, FLASHING THAT **ROLL OF BILLS?** YOU DIDN'T **NOTICE** HOW **MILLIE** STARTED LOOKING YOU OVER...

ONE SIXTY? TAKE IT OUT OF THIS!

SAY, MISTER! WHAT'S YOUR MIDDLE NAME... 'WELL-HEELER'?

YOU DIDN'T **NOTICE** THAT SIGN OF **RECOGNITION** IN HER FACE. YOU DRANK AND **SHE** DRANK... YOU LAUGHED AND **SHE** LAUGHED...AND WHEN SHE ASKED YOU THAT EXCITING **QUESTION**...



HOW'D YOU LIKE TO TAKE ME HOME, MARTIN?

SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT IDEA, MILLIE!

...YOU FELL LIKE A TON OF BRICKS. (2)

WHAT AN **IDIOTIC FOOL** YOU WERE! YOU **FELL** RIGHT INTO HER **TRAP**. SHE WASN'T LETTING YOU TAKE HER **HOME**. SHE WASN'T TAKING YOU **ANYWHERE**. SHE JUST WANTED TO **TAKE YOU**...

THAT'S WHAT I **THOUGHT**, "JOE"! YOU **ANSWERED** TO "MARTIN" WITHOUT BAT-**TING** AN **EYELASH**? YOU'RE **MARTIN BORD-
MAN**, THE **EMBEZZLER**!

WHAT!?
WHY...
I...I...

THERE **WAS** NO **USE** **STAMMERING** AROUND, MARTY! NO **USE** **WISHING** YOU **HADN'T** TAKEN A CHANCE AND CRAWLED OUT OF YOUR HOLE BEFORE IT HAD ALL BLOWN OVER. SHE'D **RECOGNIZED** YOU! YOU WERE **TRAPPED**...

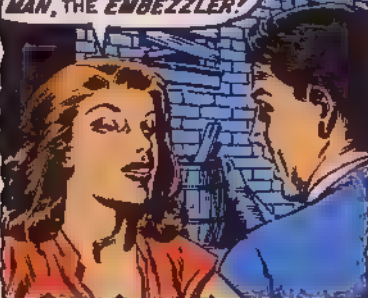
I **LIKE** YOU, MARTY... SO I WON'T BE **GREEDY**! THE **PAPERS** SAID YOU GOT AWAY WITH **FORTY GRAND**... **GOLD GASH**! ONLY **TWENTY-FIVE GRAND** WILL KEEP MY SOFT SWEET LIPS SHUT...

WHY YOU CHEAP CHISELING S**K!!

IT WAS A **WASTE** OF **INVECTIVE TALENT**, THOSE **NAMES** YOU CALLED HER, MARTY. SHE DIDN'T BUDGE **ONE PENNY**. AND SUDDENLY, YOU SAW **RED**...

ALL MY **PLANNING**... **RISKING** MY **NECK**... **SWEATING BLOOD**... AND YOU WANT TO CUT YOURSELF IN FOR **MORE THAN HALF**. YOU! A **TRAMP**! A **CRUMB** I MET ONLY AN HOUR AGO...

WAIT! KEEP AWAY! WE CAN BARGAIN...



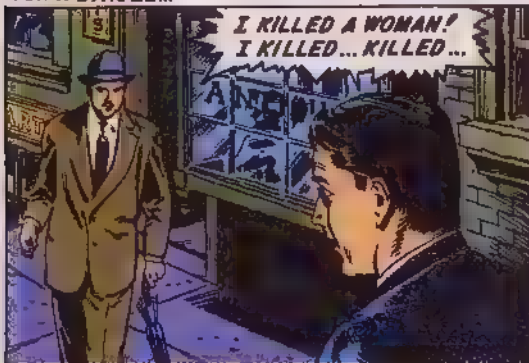
SURE, MARTY! LIKE YOU SAID! YOU **HAD** TO DO IT! YOU HAD TO **PROTECT** YOURSELF...HAD TO COVER UP **ONE CRIME** WITH **ANOTHER**. BUT THIS **OTHER THING**! THIS **VOICE** ECHOING IN YOUR BRAIN...THIS **MADDENING VOICE**, YOU DIDN'T **FIGURE** ON...

I **KILLED** A **WOMAN**! I **KILLED** **MILLIE BELSON**! SHE'S **BACK** THERE IN AN **ALLEY**... **DEAD**!

NO! STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP...



SOMEBODY'S **COMING**, MARTY! AND THAT **VOICE** WON'T BE **STILL**. **CAREFUL**, NOW! **COMPOSE YOURSELF**! PUT ON A **POKER FACE**! THAT'S IT! **THERE**! YOU LOOK LIKE AN **AVERAGE MAN** OUT FOR A **STROLL**...



I **KILLED** A **WOMAN**! I **KILLED**... **KILLED**...

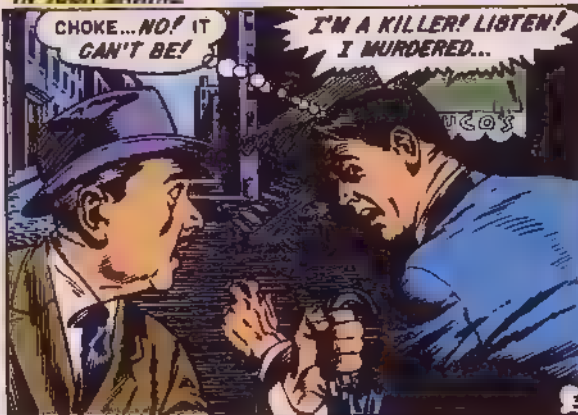
THIS **SCREAMING VOICE**...**CONFESSING** YOUR **SIN**... **SHOUTING** OUT YOUR **GUILT**...**LOUDER**...**LOUDER**... UNTIL YOU CAN **SWEAR** IT'S **ECHOING** OFF THE **BUILDINGS** AND SOMEBODY...**ANYBODY**...CAN **HEAR** IT...



I'M A **MURDERER**!

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

FOR **GOD'S SAKE**, MARTY! HE'S **STARING** AT YOU. HE **HEARS**! HE **HEARS** THAT **CRAZY SCREAMING VOICE** IN YOUR **BRAIN**...



CHOKO...NO! IT CAN'T BE!

I'M A **KILLER**! LISTEN! I **MURDERED**...

OF COURSE IT CAN'T BE, MARTY! IT'S RIDICULOUS! HOW COULD ANYBODY HEAR A VOICE THAT'S IN YOUR OWN MIND? IMPOSSIBLE! OF COURSE! CERTAINLY! BUT WHY IS HE STARING AT YOU?...



THERE! HE'S LEFT FAR BEHIND! SLOW DOWN! WALK! WATCH THE PASSERBY! WATCH THEIR FACES. HERE COMES ONE! HE WON'T HEAR! HE CAN'T! HE...



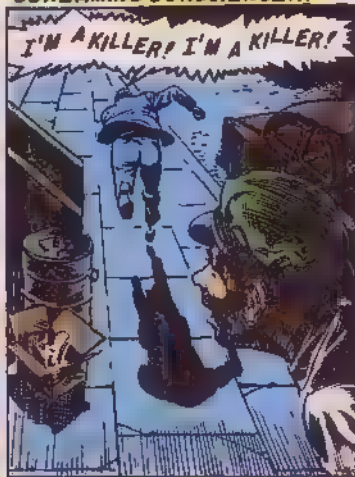
NOW YOU'RE TALKING, KID! LET'S BE SURE! LET'S MAKE THE ACID TEST. STAND BESIDE HIM. LOOK INTO THE WINDOW. SEE IF HE HEARS. SEE...



RUN, MARTY! RUN! HE DOES HEAR YOU! RUN...



RUN, MARTY! RUN SOME MORE! RUN FROM YOURSELF! RUN FROM YOUR VILE DEED AND YOUR SCREAMING CONSCIENCE...



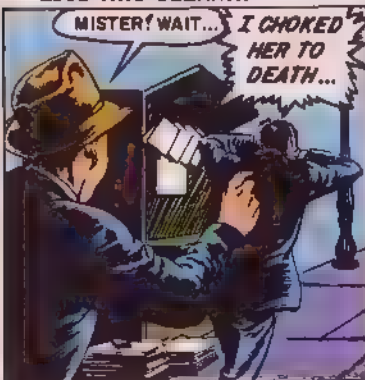
AW, COME ON, MARTY! THIS IS CHILDISH! THIS IS UNCANNY! HOW CAN ANYONE HEAR YOUR OWN GUILTY CONSCIENCE? NOW WAIT AWHILE! LET'S THINK THIS OVER...



HE DOES HEAR! HE MUST HEAR! THEY ALL HEAR! SEE HOW HE SPINS AROUND, STARING AT YOU IN WIDE-EYED HORROR...



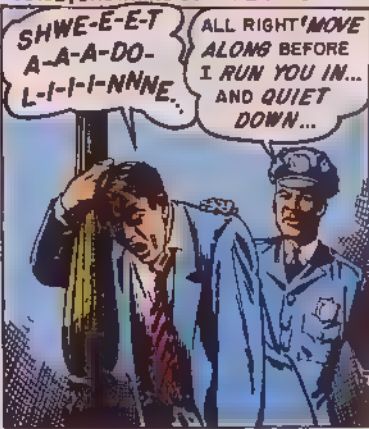
IT'S TRUE, MARTY! YOUR GUILTY MIND IS **BETRAYING** YOU...**SCREAMING** OUT FOR ALL TO HEAR...
BRANDING YOU AS A **KILLER**. YOUR **LIPS** ARE **SEALED TIGHT** BUT THE VOICE OF YOUR **CONSCIENCE** IS **LOUD AND CLEAR**...



RUN! RUN AWAY! BUT, **WHERE?** WHERE CAN YOU RUN? THAT VOICE IS **WITH YOU ALWAYS**. **NOW** YOU'VE HAD IT! LOOK WHO'S **COMING!** A **COP!** HE'LL **HEAR**...HE'LL **HEAR** FOR **SURE**...



THAT'S THE BOY, MARTY! QUICK THINKING, KID...COVERING UP BY HANGING ON THE POLE AND SINGING IN THAT LOUD NAUSEATING BARITONE VOICE, DROWNING OUT THE OTHER...



YOU WERE **LUCKY**, MARTY. BUT YOU MAY NOT **BE** AS **LUCKY** **NEXT TIME!** WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO?** HOW CAN YOU **DROWN** OUT THIS **STOOL-PIGEON** VOICE FROM YOUR **BRAIN** SO PEOPLE WON'T **HEAR?** HOW? **LISTEN!** WHAT'S THAT **RACKET?** OF COURSE! LOOK AT THAT **SIGN**...

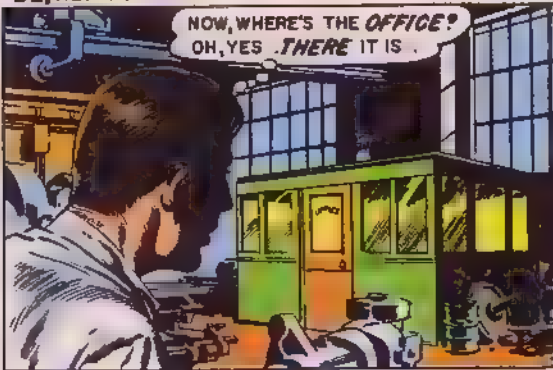
IT'LL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO **RELAX**... AND **THINK** THIS **THING** OUT! I'LL **APPLY**...

**ACME
BOILER
FACTORY**

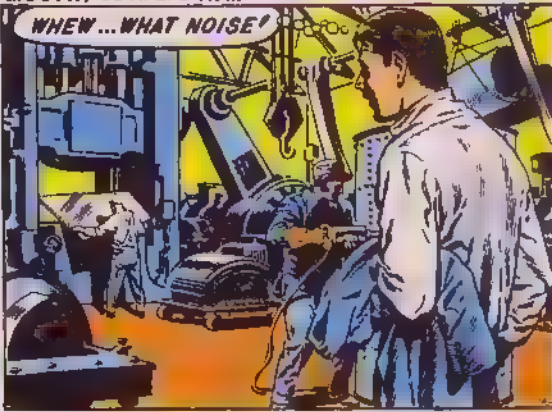
HELP WANTED
NIGHT SHIFT ONLY
APPLY AT OFFICE



LISTEN TO THAT **HIDEOUS** **HEAVENLY** **RACKET**... THAT **EAR-SPLITTING** **PERPETUAL** **HAMMERING** AND **BOOMING!** IT'S **MUSIC**, ISN'T IT, MARTY? YOU CAN **HARDLY** **HEAR** THAT VOICE NOW! **THIS** IS THE PLACE TO **BE**, ALL RIGHT.



SMART BOY, MARTY! THE **DIN** IN THIS PLACE **CERTAINLY** WILL **DROWN** OUT THAT **BABBLING** **CONFESSION** POURING FROM YOUR **CONSCIENCE'S** **BIG FAT** MOUTH. GO AHEAD **IN**...

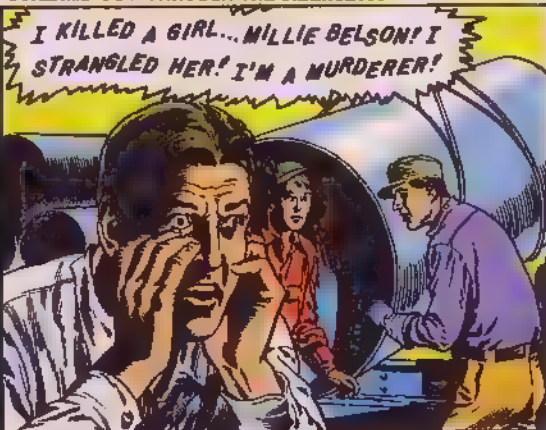


YOU START ACROSS THE **NOISY** **FACTORY** FLOOR TOWARD THE OFFICE. THE **HAMMERING** THUNDERS AROUND YOU! AND THEN, **SUDDENLY**...**THE HAMMERING** **STOPS**. **THE DIN** **SUBSIDES**...



THE FACTORY IS SILENT...DEAD SILENT...

AND THAT VOICE...THAT CRAZY IDIOTIC STUPID VOICE
SCREAMS OUT THROUGH THE SILENCE...



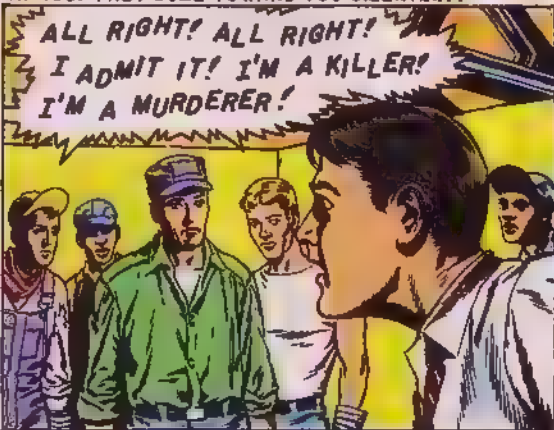
YOU CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH...
SCREAM OUT YOUR CONFESSION...WATCH THEIR SURPRISED
EXPRESSIONS CHANGE IN THE SILENCE...



YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR YOUR OWN
CONFESSION! AND THE NOISES OF
THE FACTORY, MARTY! THEY DIDN'T
STOP! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SPILL
YOUR SECRET! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...



AND THEY LOOK AT YOU...THE WORKERS. THEY STARE
AT YOU. THEY COME TOWARD YOU SILENTLY...



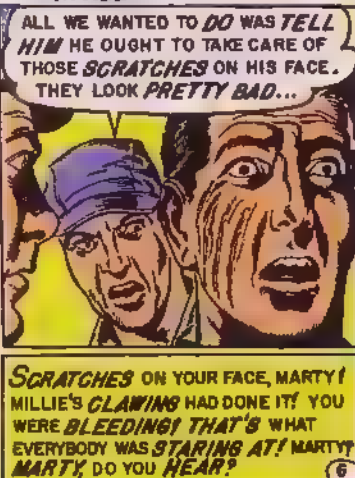
THE SILENCE, MARTY! THE SILENCE! IT'S STILL
THERE! YOU DON'T EVEN HEAR YOUR OWN VOICE!...



IT'S A POLICEMAN, MARTY, YOU
SEE HIM, BUT YOU DON'T HEAR HIS
VOICE...YOU DON'T HEAR THE
BOILER FACTORY WORKERS
TELL HIM...



YOU DON'T HEAR THE REASON
WHY EVERYBODY STARED AT YOU,
MARTY! IT WASN'T BECAUSE ANYONE
HEARD YOUR CONSCIENCE! THAT
WAS INSIDE YOU...



SCRATCHES ON YOUR FACE, MARTY!
MILLIE'S GLAWING HAD DONE IT! YOU
WERE BLEEDING! THAT'S WHAT
EVERYBODY WAS STARING AT! MARTY,
MARTY, DO YOU HEAR?

WELL TRAINED

YOU STAND, UNABLE TO MOVE, GAWKING IN HORROR AT THE DRASTIC NIGHTMARISH SCENE BEFORE YOU... YOUR WIFE'S BODY, TORN BY A DOZEN BLOODY WOUNDS... HER STARTLED ATTACKER CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF STUFFING HER PURSE INTO HIS POCKET... THE UGLY BLADE IN HIS HAND, RED-WET AND GLEAMING. YOUR DAZED MIND FIGHTS AGAINST THIS GOD-AWFUL REALITY... FIGHTS TO BELIEVE IT WILL SOON AWAKEN FROM WHAT IS ONLY A HARROWING DREAM... THAT YOUR MARY... LOVELY, BLUE-EYED, RAVEN-HAIRED MARY... WILL BE ALIVE AGAIN, AND SMILING AGAIN, INSTEAD OF LYING PALE AND STILL BEFORE YOU. BUT THIS IS NO DREAM. THIS IS TOO REAL TO DENY. MARY IS THERE... HER RAVEN-HAIR MATTED WITH DRIED BLOOD... HER BLUE EYES STARING EMPTY AT THE COLD, WHITE CEILING. AND YOU CHOKED THE WORDS...

YOU. YOU DIRTY FILTHY MURDERER...

ALL RIGHT! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'LL USE THIS ON YOU IF I HAVE TO...

SIX YEARS A COP, TOM GIBSON, AND YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE. YOU'VE SEEN THE VICTIM YOU'VE PICTURED THE INTRUDER COMING IN... ROBBING... BEING SURPRISED... THEN BRUTAL MURDER. YOU'VE GOTTEN SICK OVER IT... GOTTEN MAD. BUT IT NEVER HIT HOME BEFORE. NOT LIKE THIS. NOT LIKE SEEING MARY THERE WITH HER KILLER STANDING OVER HER. IT STARTS A SCREECHING, POUNDING, WHITE-HOT HATE RAMPAGING THROUGH EVERY NERVE IN YOUR BODY, AND YOU REACH FOR YOUR SERVICE REVOLVER, CURSING...

YOU SCUM! YOU ROTTEN @**!!



HE SEES THAT DEADLY HATE IN YOUR FACE... IN YOUR BURNING EYES. HE SEES THE FAMILIAR MOVEMENT, WHIRLS, AND PLUNGES THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW. THE SHOCK OF SHATTERING GLASS RESTORES YOUR REFLEXES. A HOARSE CRY RIPS FROM YOUR PARCHED LIPS...

STOP! STOP OR I'LL SHOOT!



YOUR .38 BARKS, AND A STEEL SLUG SCREAMS PAST THE KILLER'S EAR. HE STUMBLES, GOES SPRAWLING. YOU SPRING THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW WITHOUT FEELING THE JAGGED PANE CLAW AT YOUR FLESH...



YOU KICK HIM. AGAIN AND AGAIN, YOU KICK. YOU DRIVE YOUR HEAVY SHOE WHERE IT HURTS MOST, AND WHILE HE'S DOUBLED UP AND WRITHING IN AGONY, YOU KICK SOME MORE...

NO MORE...GASP! PLEASE! GASP...NO...MORE...



YOU FEEL NO SATISFACTION IN HIS PAIN...NO COMPENSATION FOR MARY...JUST SCALDING, ROARING, SPITTING HATE. YOU DRIVE YOUR FISTS INTO HIS FACE...AGAIN...AND AGAIN...AND AGAIN...

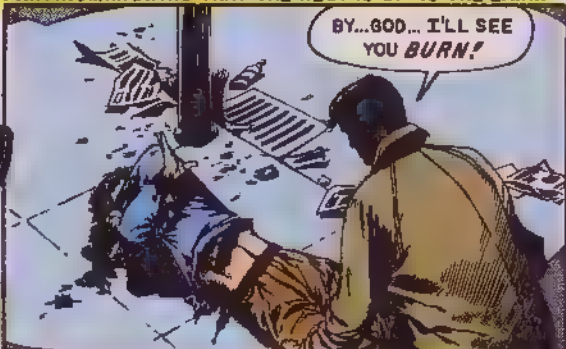


FURY! BLIND! UNCONTROLLED! YOU TEAR AT HIS HAIR, POUNDING HIS HEAD AGAINST THE GROUND...AGAINST THE GROUND...AGAINST...

SHOOT...ME...FOR...GOD'S...SAKE! GET...IT...OVER...



AND THEN THE FURY SUBSIDES. NOT THE HATE! NOT THE LUST FOR REVENGE! THE BLINDING FURY TO TORTURE AND INFLICT PAIN SUBSIDES. YOU STAND OVER HIM...TOM GIBSON...DETECTIVE...DRENCHED IN YOUR OWN SWEAT...PANTING...KNOWING THAT THE REST IS UP TO THE LAW...



BY...GOD...I'LL SEE YOU BURN!

YOU'RE A COP, TOM GIBSON...A **GOOD** COP! YOU GO BY THE **BOOK**. YOU KNOW THE BOOK SAYS YOUR JOB IS TO MAKE THE PINCH. SO YOU DRAG THE BROKEN HEAP OF A MAN TO A LAMPOST AND YOU HANDCUFF HIS WRISTS AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME ON SOME PAPERS AND YOU SPIT THE NAME OUT...

MIKE FERRIS! WELL, I'M GOING TO WATCH YOU BURN, MIKE FERRIS!

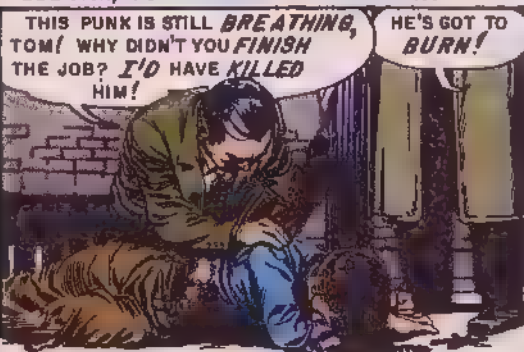


YOU GO BACK INTO YOUR HOUSE WITHOUT LOOKING AT MARY, AND YOU DIAL HEADQUARTERS LIKE THE BOOK SAYS...

HELLO...G'IME HOMICIDE...SERGEANT WALLACE! HELLO? THIS IS GIBSON...AT 214 ELM. GET THE CORONER AND THE MORGUE WAGON DOWN HERE. YEAH! YEAH, BILL! MY SOB...MY WIFE.

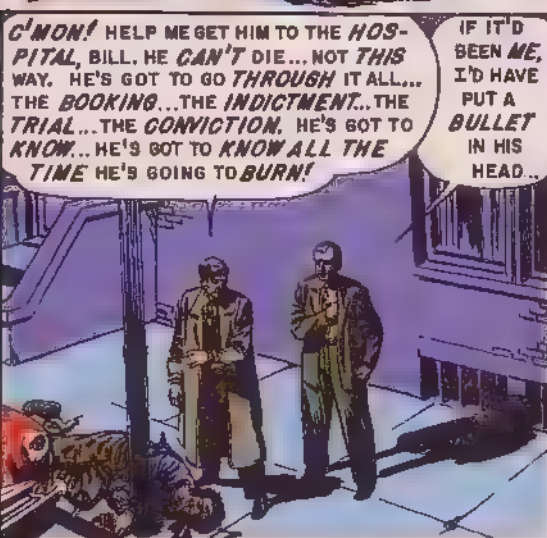


YOU WAIT AND THEY COME. YOU RE-LIVE THE NIGHTMARE FOR SGT. WALLACE, YOUR BEST FRIEND, DROWNING ON IN A MATTER-OF-FACT MONOTONE ABOUT A MAN WHO BROKE IN AND ROBBED AND MURDERED A WOMAN, AND WHEN THE OFFICIAL BOOK-WORK IS DONE, YOU FEEL SICK, AND BILL TAKES YOU OUTSIDE...



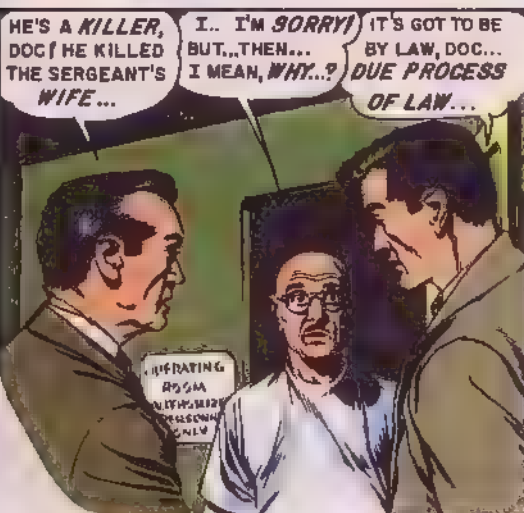
THIS PUNK IS STILL **BREATHING**, TOM! WHY DIDN'T YOU **FINISH** THE JOB? **I'D HAVE KILLED HIM!**

HE'S GOT TO **BURN!**



C'MON! HELP ME GET HIM TO THE **HOSPITAL**, BILL. HE **CAN'T DIE...** NOT **THIS** WAY. HE'S GOT TO GO **THROUGH** IT ALL... THE **BOOKING...THE INDICTMENT...THE TRIAL...THE CONVICTION.** HE'S GOT TO **KNOW...** HE'S GOT TO **KNOW ALL THE TIME** HE'S GOING TO **BURN!**

IF IT'D BEEN **ME**, I'D HAVE PUT A **BULLET** IN HIS HEAD...

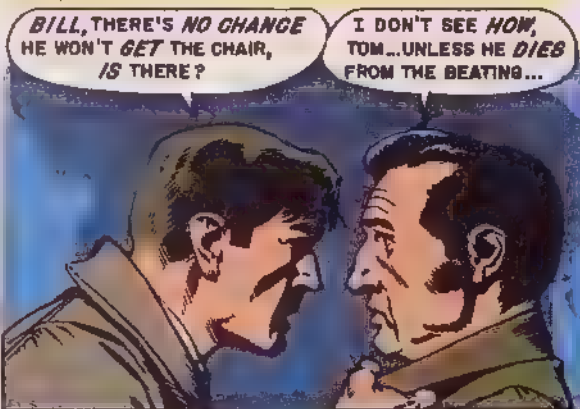


HE'S A **KILLER**, DOC! HE **KILLED** THE **SERGEANT'S WIFE...**

I.. I'M **SORRY!** BUT...THEN... I MEAN, **WHY...?**

IT'S GOT TO BE BY **LAW**, DOC... **DUE PROCESS OF LAW...**

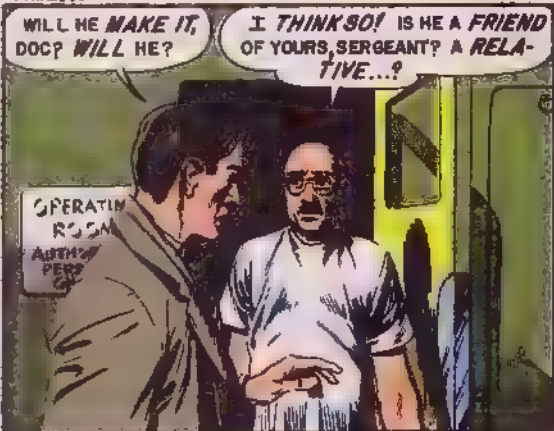
YOU LOOK AT THE **BRUISED** AND **BATTERED** AND **SWOLLEN** **FACE...** AND FOR A **MOMENT**, A **FRIGHTENING** **THOUGHT** **HITS** YOU...



BILL, THERE'S **NO CHANGE** HE WON'T **GET** THE **CHAIR**, **IS** THERE?

I DON'T SEE **HOW**, TOM...UNLESS HE **DIES** FROM THE **BEATING...**

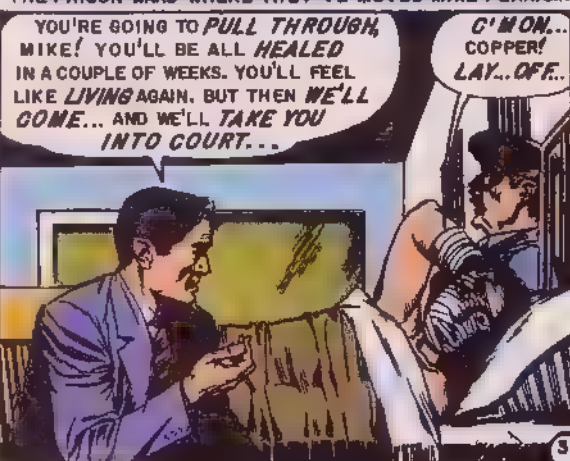
THE **AMBULANCE** **COMES**, AND YOU **HELP** **LOAD** **MIKE FERRIS** **IN.** YOU AND **BILL** **RIDE** **DOWN** **TO** **THE** **HOSPITAL** **WITH** **HIM.** YOU **WAIT** **WHILE** **THEY** **WORK** **ON** **HIM.** YOU **WAIT** **A** **LONG** **TIME...**



WILL HE **MAKE** **IT**, **DOC?** WILL HE?

I **THINK** **SO!** IS HE A **FRIEND** OF YOURS, **SERGEANT?** A **RELA-TIVE...**?

THE **NEXT** **MORNING**, YOU'RE **BACK** **AT** **THE** **HOSPITAL...** IN **THE** **PRISON** **WARD** **WHERE** **THEY'**VE **MOVED** **MIKE FERRIS...**



YOU'RE **GOING** **TO** **PULL** **THROUGH**, **MIKE!** YOU'LL **BE** **ALL** **HEALED** **IN** **A** **COUPLE** **OF** **WEEKS.** YOU'LL **FEEL** **LIKE** **LIVING** **AGAIN.** **BUT** **THEN** **WE'LL** **COME...** AND **WE'LL** **TAKE** **YOU** **INTO** **COURT...**

C'MON... **COPPER!** **LAY...OFF...**

YOU SIT BESIDE HIM, HISsing YOUR WORDS AT HIM...TORMENTING HIM...

THEY'LL FIND YOU 'GUILTY OF MURDER', MIKE! THEY'LL SENTENCE YOU TO DIE...IN THE CHAIR! YOU'LL HAVE A FEW WEEKS TO THINK IT OVER...



...AND I'LL COME AND VISIT YOU, MIKE, I'LL COME EVERY DAY, I'LL COME AND I'LL TELL YOU HOW IT'S GOING TO BE...AND HOW IT'S GOING TO FEEL WHEN THEY FINALLY TURN ON THE JUICE...



BILL IS THERE, STANDING OVER YOU, HIS HAND ON YOUR SHOULDER...

HEY, GET HIM OUT OF HERE, WILL YUH?

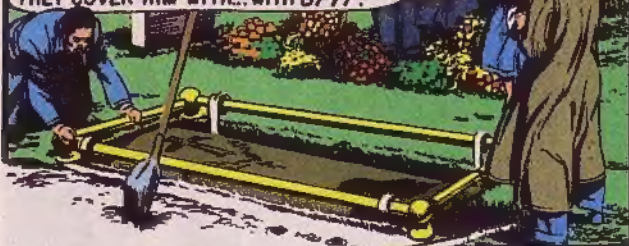
THEY GAVE YOU TWO WEEKS LEAVE, TOM. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A LITTLE TRIP SOMEWHERE...?

NO! I'VE GOT TO BE HERET I GOT TO TELL MIKE ALL ABOUT IT. I GOT TO SEE...



IT'S ETCHED IN YOUR MIND NOW, TOM...JUST HOW THE LAW YOU'VE SWORN TO UPHOLD IS GOING TO EXACT PAYMENT FROM MIKE FERRIS. YOU EVEN WHISPER IT IN A GOODBYE PROMISE TO MARY...

I'LL WATCH, MARY...AND I'LL SEE THE SWITCH THROWN...SMELL THE ODOR OF HIS BURNING FLESH...HELP THEM DUMP HIM INTO A PINE BOX...WATCH THEM DROP HIM INTO A GRAVE. AND THEN I'LL FOUL UP THE DIRT THEY COVER HIM WITH...WITH SPIT!



FROM MARY'S GRAVESIDE, YOU HURRY BACK TO MIKE'S BEDSIDE...

...THE PRISON BARBER WILL COME AND SHAVE YOUR HEAD, MIKE. THAT'S SO YOUR HAIR WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE CURRENT FROM THE HOOD.

CUT IT OUT! CUT IT..

YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE NOW, GIBSON...



YOU IGNORE THE DOCTOR'S REQUEST...

THEY'LL SLIT YOUR PANTS LEGS SO THEY WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE ELECTRODES. THEY'RE GOING TO STRAP TO YOUR ANKLES. AND IN A LITTLE WHILE, THE WARDEN'LL COME IN...

DOC! MAKE HIM STOP!



I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AROUND THIS WARD AGAIN, GIBSON!

THE LAW, DOC! THE LAW! THAT'S WHAT I LIVE BY! THE LAW OF THIS STATE SAYS A MURDERER'S GOT DIE IN THE CHAIR...



THEN, FOR PETE'S SAKE, LET THE LAW TAKE IT'S COURSE. KEEP AWAY FROM HIM!

HE'S GOT TO KNOW HE'S GOING TO BURN! HE'S GOT TO DIE OVER AND OVER THE WAY MARY... SOB...



THE DAYS PASS INTO WEEKS, TOM GIBSON, AND YOU CONTINUE YOUR VISITS TO THE PRISON WARD OF THE HOSPITAL, WATCHING FOR THE DOCTOR, SNEAKING IN WHEN HE'S GONE...

I KNOW! I KNOW! GIMME A BREAK, GIBSON! THE WARDEN'LL BRING IN YOUR **LAST MEAL**, MIKE...**ANYTHING** YOU ORDER. YOU'LL **STUFF IT DOWN**, BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO **KEEP IT THERE**. YOU'LL **THROW IT UP** AND YOU'LL **SMELL SOUR**...



THEY'LL **EVEN** GIVE YOU A **DRINK**. IT'S **SUPPOSED** TO DULL YOUR **SENSES**. BUT IT **NEVER DOES!** YOU'LL **KNOW EVERYTHING** THAT'S **GOING ON**. THEY'LL **COME** AND THEY'LL **SAY**, "IT'S **TIME**, MIKE!"



EVEN MIKE'S GUARD FINALLY OBJECTS, BUT YOU IGNORE HIM...

DON'T YOU THINK YOU OUGHT TO **LAY OFF HIM**, GIBSON? THEY'LL **HELP** YOU WALK THAT **'LAST MILE'**, MIKE...TO THE **LITTLE GREEN DOOR**. AND THERE IT'LL BE! THE **ELECTRIC CHAIR!** THE **HOT SEAT!**



EVEN AS THE GUARD PUSHES YOU TO THE DOOR, YOU CALL OVER YOUR SHOULDER...

GO HOME, TOM! THIS ISN'T DOING **ANYBODY** ANY GOOD! THEY'LL STRAP **SPONGES** SOAKED WITH **SALT WATER** TO YOUR **WRISTS!** THEY'LL... **LISTEN**, MIKE. I'LL BE **BACK** AGAIN! I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU'LL **SHRIEK** WHEN THAT FIRST **TEN-THOUSAND VOLT JOLT** HITS YOU...



THE BROODING OBSESSION THAT GRIPS YOUR MIND HAS YOU TOTTERING ON THE BRINK OF MADNESS, TOM GIBSON. YOUR TORTURED DREAMS ARE AN UNENDING REPETITION OF THE NAGGING THEME YOU'VE GONE THROUGH DURING THE DAY...

EVERY **NERVE**... YOU'LL EVEN **HEAT**, YOU'LL **DIE**, EVERY **PARTICLE**... SMELL YOUR **MIKE!... BURNED** OF **FLESH** **BURNED**, **SELF BURNING**, **BIG** **ALIVE** BY THE **MIKE!... SCORCHED!** **MIKE!** **LAW!**



AND IN THE MOMENTS OF YOUR WAKING...WHEN YOU REACH OVER TO TOUCH MARY, AND YOU FIND SHE ISN'T THERE, AND YOU REMEMBER...IT STARTS ALL OVER AGAIN...

...WHEN THE **STENCH** OF YOUR **ROASTING FLESH** FILLS THE **EXECUTION CHAMBER**, I'LL **KNOW** MARY IS AT PEACE IN HER GRAVE, MIKE...



THE MOMENT YOU ENTER THE HOSPITAL THAT MORNING, YOU FEEL THE TENSE ANXIOUS AIR ABOUT THE PLACE. BILL COMES RUNNING DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND YOU CAN ALMOST READ WHAT'S HAPPENED ON HIS FACE...

BILL! IS IT MIKE FERRIS? **YEAH!** HE ESCAPED...**FIVE MINUTES** AGO...THEY THINK HE'S STILL IN THE BUILDING...



THE NEWS LEAVES YOU LIMP... STUNNED. A MOMENT LATER YOU FORCE YOURSELF TO RUN AFTER BILL...CATCH UP WITH HIM...GASP AN ANGRY QUESTION...

HOW IN BLAZES SHOULD I KNOW HOW? HE WAS GONE WHEN I GOT HERE!

WHOSE FAULT WAS IT, BILL? I'VE GOT TO KNOW! I'LL...



YOURS...YOUR FAULT... THE WAY YOU KEPT AT HIM WAS WORSE THAN GOING TO THE CHAIR. HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. THE DOC SAID HE WAS CRAZY WITH FEAR...

I ONLY TOLD HIM WHAT THE LAW WAS GOING TO DO...



SUDDENLY, THERE'S A MADDENING KALEIDOSCOPE OF FACES WHIRLING IN YOUR TWISTED BRAIN... SCOWLING, LEERING, LAUGHING FACES. AND THEY'RE ALL MIKE FERRIS... MOCKING YOU...TORMENTING YOU...

YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID TO MARY? HE'S GOT TO PAY FOR THAT! HE'S NOT GOING TO CHEAT THE LAW!

LOOK! THERE HE GOES!



MIKE DASHES MADLY FOR THE HOSPITAL ENTRANCE. BILL LIFTS HIS REVOLVER...

YOU SCREAM AT MIKE AS HE DASHES DOWN THE HOSPITAL STEPS...AND YOU DELIBERATELY GET BETWEEN HIM AND BILL SO BILL CAN'T SHOOT...



HOLD IT, MIKE! STOP...OR I'LL SHOOT...

NO, YOU DON'T, BILL! YOU CAN'T SHOOT HIM! HE'S GOT TO DIE IN THE CHAIR! HE'S GOT TO BURN...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE! BURN! BURN!

GET OUT OF MY WAY TOM!

OVER AND OVER AND OVER YOU SHRIEK THE WORDS THAT DRIVE MIKE FERRIS DOWN THE SUBWAY KIOSK LIKE A SCARED RABBIT SCAMPERING DOWN A HOLE...

THE SUBWAY STAIRS RUSH UP BENEATH YOUR POUNDING FEET. YOU REACH THE PLATFORM IN TIME TO SEE MIKE CLIMBING DOWN TO THE TRACKS...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE!



FOR GOD'S SAKE...LET ME GET A SHOT AT HIM, TOM!

NO! NO! NOT THAT WAY! IT'S GOT TO BE BY LAW! HE'S GOT TO BURN...

MIKE STARTS ACROSS THE TRACKS TO THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM. YOU WANT TO CLIMB DOWN AFTER HIM, BUT BILL HOLDS YOU IN A DEATH GRIP...



DON'T BE A FOOL!

LE' ME GO!
LE' ME GET HIM!

YOU SEE HIM TURN BACK...HESITATE...STUMBLE OVER HIS OWN FEET IN HIS AWKWARD DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO REACH SAFETY. YOU SEE THE WILD LOOK OF TERROR ON HIS FACE AS HE FALLS...



YAAAAAHHHHHHH

YOU SEE MIKE REACH THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM...SEE THE SUDDEN FEAR IN HIS FACE AS A RUMBLING ROARING NOISE GROWS IN THE GREAT CAVERN. YOU SEE THE STEEL MONSTER TEARING OUT OF THE YAWNING TUNNEL...



GET BACK, YOU IDIOT...

YOU SEE HIM SPRAWL ACROSS THE SHINING RAILS...REACHING OUT...CLAWING BLINDLY FOR SOMETHING TO PULL HERSELF UP. HIS SCREAMS AND THE SCREAM OF WHEEL ON TRACK COMBINE IN A SINGLE NERVE-SHATTERING SQUEAL THAT SETS YOUR TEETH ON EDGE...



SKREEEE

AND AS THE TRAIN PASSES OVER HIM, YOU SEE THE BLINDING BLUE SPARKS...SMELL THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH...

THREE CARS PASS OVER MIKE'S BODY BEFORE THE TRAIN GRINDS TO A STOP. YOU KEEP STARING STUPIDLY AT THE RED GROUND-UP MESS THAT WAS ONCE A MAN...



WELL...THAT...
CHOKES...SAVES
THE STATE THE
TROUBLE...

DID HE CHEAT
THE LAW, BILL?
DID HE? DID HE?

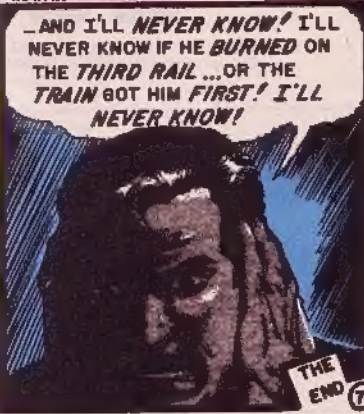
YOUR VOICE IS HIGH-PITCHED...
ALMOST A SHRIEK...

WHAT DIFFERENCE
DOES IT MAKE? TOM!
GET HOLD OF YOUR-
SELF!

HE'S DEAD!
HE'S...DEAD!



AND EVEN YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN VOICE, TOM GIBSON. IT SOUNDS LIKE THE VOICE OF A MAD MAN...



...AND I'LL NEVER KNOW! I'LL
NEVER KNOW IF HE BURNED ON
THE THIRD RAIL...OR THE
TRAIN GOT HIM FIRST! I'LL
NEVER KNOW!

THE
END